

**METHOD AND BUFFER DEVICE FOR DATA STREAM TRANSFORMATION
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

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5 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to a method and buffer device for data stream transformation, more particularly to a method and buffer device for data stream transformation between line-based and block-based data streams.

2. Description of the Related Art

JPEG and MPEG are international standards in the fields of static and dynamic image compression, respectively. In the case of MPEG, as shown in Figure 1, a data structure thereof consists of at least one sequence that includes a plurality of groups of pictures (abbreviated as GOP). Each picture is further subdivided into a plurality of slices. Each slice is further subdivided into a plurality of macro blocks (abbreviated as MB). Each macro block can be formed from four luminance blocks and a plurality of chrominance blocks. Finally, each block includes 8×8 bytes, which is defined as the smallest coding unit of the data structure in MPEG.

As shown in Figure 2, to compress original image data in an MPEG-1 or MPEG-2 format, data stream transformation is first performed so as to convert an input data stream into a block-based output data stream, as indicated in

step 201. Subsequently, in step 202, pixel data in each block are converted from time domain to frequency domain using discrete cosine transformation (DCT) so as to filter out high frequency components that are insensitive to the human eye. Then, in step 203, quantization is performed so as to quantize many converted DCT coefficients to zero. Next, in step 204, a zigzag scan operation is performed to re-arrange the quantized DCT coefficients in an increasing order of frequency. Thereafter, in step 205, differential pulse coded modulation (DPCM) is performed on DC coefficients, run length encoding (RLE) is performed on AC coefficients, and variable length coding (VLC) is finally performed on both coefficients so as to complete compression in the MPEG-1/MPEG-2 format. The JPEG compression operation is similar to the aforesaid process flow. In the same token, the aforesaid process flow is reversed when decompressing data.

Referring to Figure 3, since both JPEG and MPEG use blocks as basic processing units, in order to transform a line-based input data stream into a block-based output data stream as required in step 201 of Figure 2, a buffer memory 7 and a buffer controller 8 are typically used for processing.

When a data stream is written into the buffer memory 7 under the control of the buffer controller 8, the data stream is written in sequence from left to right and

from top to bottom. However, since data are to be read in basic units of blocks, the buffer controller 8 will read data in a vertical direction (for example, read 8×8 bytes for output from top to bottom starting from the left topmost corner such that the content of the output data stream includes the first block). By virtue of this characteristic, data are not available for reading unless the buffer memory 7 is filled, and writing in the buffer memory 7 is possible only after data have been read therefrom.

Therefore, in general, the buffer memory 7 will be divided into two parts, where one part is used for input data, and the other part is used for output data. As shown in Figure 3, when an upper part 71 is filled with data so that data can be outputted in units of blocks, a lower part 72 is available for a data writing operation. After data have been outputted from the upper part 71, the latter will be available for a subsequent data writing operation. Likewise, when the lower part 72 is filled with data, the data can be outputted therefrom.

Nevertheless, although the arrangement in Figure 3 results in an increase in data input and output speeds, a large buffer memory 7 is required to ensure optimum performance.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Therefore, the object of the present invention is to provide a method and buffer device for data stream

transformation with a relatively small memory requirement so as to solve the aforesaid drawback of the prior art.

According to one aspect of the present invention,
5 there is provided a method for transforming an input data stream into an output data stream, wherein one of the input and output data streams is a line-based data stream, while the other of the input and output data streams is a block-based data stream. The method
10 comprises the steps of: a) assigning addressable locations of a buffer memory with write labeled positions according to a write data sequence; b) writing the input data stream into the addressable locations of the buffer memory in accordance with the write labeled positions
15 and the write data sequence; c) calculating read labeled positions corresponding to the write labeled positions in accordance with the write data sequence and a read data sequence; and d) in accordance with the read data sequence, reading data from the addressable locations
20 of the buffer memory with reference to the read labeled positions so as to generate the output data stream.

According to another aspect of the present invention,
there is provided a buffer device for transforming an input data stream into an output data stream, wherein
25 one of the input and output data streams is a line-based data stream, while the other of the input and output data streams is a block-based data stream. The buffer

device comprises a buffer memory, a label memory, and a buffer controller. The buffer memory is adapted to be configured into addressable locations for writing the input data stream therein. The label memory is used for storing write and read labeled positions. The buffer controller is connected to the buffer memory and the label memory, controls the writing of the input data stream into the addressable locations of the buffer memory in accordance with the write labeled positions and a write data sequence, calculates the read labeled positions corresponding to the write labeled positions in accordance with the write data sequence and a read data sequence, updates the read labeled positions stored in the label memory, and, in accordance with the read data sequence, reads data from the addressable locations of the buffer memory with reference to the read labeled positions stored in the label memory so as to generate the output data stream.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram to illustrate MPEG data structures;

Figure 2 is a flowchart to illustrate an MPEG compression operation;

Figure 3 is a block diagram of a conventional buffer device for data stream transformation;

Figure 4 is a schematic circuit block diagram of the first preferred embodiment of a buffer device for data stream transformation according to the present invention;

Figures 5 to 10 illustrate buffer content during consecutive write and read operations for transforming a line-based data stream into a block-based data stream according to the first preferred embodiment; and

Figures 11 to 15 illustrate buffer content during consecutive write and read operations for transforming a block-based data stream into a line-based data stream according to the second preferred embodiment of a buffer device for data stream transformation of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figure 4 shows the first preferred embodiment of a buffer device 100 for data stream transformation according to the present invention. In this embodiment, the buffer device 100 is used to transform a line-based input data stream into a block-based output data stream, and includes a buffer memory 1, a label memory 2 and a buffer controller 3.

The buffer memory 1 is adapted for writing the input data stream therein under the control of the buffer controller 3. In this embodiment, the buffer memory 1

includes a 640×8-byte memory. In other words, the buffer memory 1 can be used to store an image with a 640×8 pixel size. In practice, the size of the buffer memory 1 should not be limited thereto and can vary depending upon actual requirements. As shown in Figure 5, the buffer memory 1 is configured into equally sized addressable locations for writing the input data stream therein. In this embodiment, each addressable location has a size of 8×1 bytes. Therefore, the total number of addressable locations in the buffer memory 1 for this embodiment is 640.

The initial addresses of the addressable locations are labeled for subsequent read and write operations. Although each addressable location only includes a physical labeled position, for convenience of illustration, in the following description, the labeled position of each addressable location is denoted as a write labeled position $I(t)$ for a write operation, and a read labeled position $O(t)$ for a read operation, where (t) stands for a write or read sequence, and has values ranging from 0 to 639.

The block size processed in this embodiment is the smallest processing unit that complies with an MPEG or JPEG standard, and is hence 8×8 bytes. Therefore, in this embodiment, a data block is composed of eight columns of addressable locations. In addition, each data block row of the buffer memory 1 contains 80 data blocks.

For data transformation from a line-based data stream into a block-based data stream, the read labeled positions are calculated based on the formula:

$$O_n(t) = I_n((t \% h) \times w + (t/h)) \quad (1)$$

where $O_n(t)$ is the read labeled position for a read data sequence (t) of an n th read operation, $I_n(t)$ is the write labeled position for a write data sequence (t) of an n th write operation, (h) is the height of a data block, (w) is a total number of data blocks that can be accommodated in a single data block row of the buffer memory 1, $(t \% h)$ is the remainder of the quotient of (t) divided by (h) , and (t/h) is the integer part of the quotient of (t) divided by (h) .

In this embodiment, since $h=8$ and $w=80$, therefore, formula (1) can be simplified as:

$$O_n(t) = I_n((t \% 8) \times 80 + (t/8)) \quad (2)$$

As such, the first read labeled position $O(0)=I(0)$, which is the first write labeled position; the second read labeled position $O(1)=I((1 \% 8) \times 80 + (1/8))=I(80)$; the third write labeled position $O(2)=I((2 \% 8) \times 80 + (2/8))=I(160)$; ... etc. Therefore, based on formula (2), $O(3)=I(240)$, $O(4)=I(320)$, $O(5)=I(400)$, $O(6)=I(480)$, and $O(7)=I(560)$. As $O(0)$, $O(1)$, $O(2)$, $O(3)$, $O(4)$, $O(5)$, $O(6)$ and $O(7)$ are read in sequence from the buffer memory 1 and correspond to $I(0)$, $I(80)$, $I(160)$, $I(240)$, $I(320)$, $I(400)$, $I(480)$ and $I(560)$, the output data stream can contain the first data block. Then, $O(8)$, $O(9)$, ... etc.

are read for outputting the other data blocks.

The label memory 2 is used for storing write and read labeled positions. Since the present invention permits overlapping read and write operations, the label memory 2 must store the write and read labeled positions $I(0) \sim I(639)$ and $O(0) \sim O(639)$ therein. Thus, in this embodiment, the label memory 2 should have a memory space of 2×2^{10} bytes, which is sufficient to provide first and second memory areas. The first memory area is referenced by the buffer controller 3 when accessing the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 during first write and read operations. The second memory area is used by the buffer controller 3 for storing updated labeled positions calculated from the labeled positions in the first memory area and referenced by the buffer controller 3 when the latter accesses the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 during second write and read operations. When the buffer controller 3 performs the second write and read operations, the labeled positions in the first memory area will be updated to reflect those to be referenced by the buffer controller 3 during third write and read operations. Therefore, the buffer controller 3 can, on the one hand, reference the labeled positions stored in the label memory 2 for current write and read operations, and, on the other hand, updates the labeled positions stored in the label memory 2 for subsequent write and read

operations.

For convenience of illustration, in the following description, the labeled positions are directly labeled on the buffer memory 1. However, it should be borne in mind that the labeled positions are in fact stored in the label memory 2 for access by the buffer controller 3.

The buffer controller 3 is connected to the buffer memory 1 and the label memory 2, controls the writing of the input data stream into the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 in accordance with the write labeled positions and a write data sequence $I(0), I(1), \dots, I(639)$, calculates the read labeled positions corresponding to the write labeled positions in accordance with the write data sequence and a read data sequence based on the aforementioned formula (2), updates the read labeled positions stored in the label memory 2, and, in accordance with the read data sequence, reads data from the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 with reference to the read labeled positions stored in the label memory 2 so as to generate the output data stream.

Operation of the buffer device 100 according to the first preferred embodiment will now be described in greater detail with reference to Figures 5 to 10.

1) First write operation:

Referring to Figure 5, the buffer controller 3 refers to the write labeled positions in the label memory 2 so as to write the input data stream into the buffer memory 1 according to the sequence $I_1(0), I_1(1), I_1(2), \dots$.

5 2) First read operation:

Referring to Figure 6, in the present invention, a read operation may be started even before completion of a current write operation. For instance, in this embodiment, before the last row of addressable locations
10 corresponding to the write labeled positions $I_1(560) \sim I_1(639)$ are filled with data, reading of the data from the buffer memory 1 can begin. That is, even before a write operation of the input data stream is completed, a read operation to generate the output data stream can
15 be started.

As described in the foregoing, the read labeled positions $O_1(0), O_1(1), O_1(2), \dots$ are obtained through calculations of the buffer controller 3 according to the aforementioned formula (2). Hence, the buffer
20 controller 3 refers to the read labeled positions in the label memory 2 when reading data from the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 according to the sequence $O_1(0), O_1(1), O_1(2), \dots$ (which correspond to the addressable locations having write labeled positions
25 $I_1(0), I_1(80), I_1(160), \dots$).

Moreover, during the read operation, writing in the addressable locations corresponding to the write

labeled positions $I_1(560) \sim I_1(639)$ can proceed at the same time without affecting reading of the addressable locations corresponding to $O_1(0) \sim O_1(7)$.

3) Second write operation:

As shown in Figure 7, at the end of the first write operation, i.e., writing in the addressable location corresponding to $I_1(639)$ has been completed, reading of data in some of the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 has been completed. Hence, a second write operation can proceed immediately. Based on the following formula (3):

$$I_{n+1}(t) = O_n(t) \quad (3),$$

a write labeled position $I_{n+1}(t)$ for a write data sequence (t) of an $(n+1)$ th write operation is equal to $O_n(t)$. In other words, the addressable location that corresponds to $O_1(0)$ during the first read operation further corresponds to $I_2(0)$ during the second write operation. Therefore, writing of the input data stream during the second write operation proceeds in the sequence $I_2(0), I_2(1), \dots$ which also corresponds to the sequence $O_1(0), O_1(1), \dots$, as shown in Figure 8.

4) Second read operation:

As shown in Figure 9, at the end of the first read operation, i.e., reading of the addressable location corresponding to $O_1(639)$ has been completed, writing of data into some of the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 has been completed. Hence, a second read

operation can proceed immediately. As shown in Figure 10, the read labeled positions $O_2(0)$, $O_2(1)$, ... for the second read operation are obtained through calculations of the buffer controller 3 according to the
5 aforementioned formula (2) and correspond to the write labeled positions $I_2(0)$, $I_2(80)$, In other words, although the second write operation is performed in sequence from top to bottom and from left to right, the buffer controller 3 can still calculate the desired read
10 labeled positions $O_2(0)$, $O_2(1)$, ... corresponding to the write labeled positions $I_2(0)$, $I_2(80)$, In this manner, the output data stream still contains data in units of blocks during the second read operation.

Therefore, through iteration of the aforesaid write
15 and read operations, the output data stream in this embodiment always contains data in units of blocks. As the order of write and read operations increases, the order of reading and writing of the addressable locations grows in complexity. However, as long as the buffer memory
20 1 is divided into equally sized addressable locations that are labeled with initial positions, even if data of the input data stream are stored in non-adjacent addressable locations, the buffer controller 3 can always generate the desired read and write labeled
25 positions to ensure correct data storage and retrieval by virtue of formulas (2) and (3).

Moreover, for compression of static images using JPEG formats, a separate process is usually employed for each of the three primary colors, i.e., red, green and blue. Hence, three identical buffer memories 1 may be implemented during data stream transformation. In this embodiment, for simplicity of illustration, only one buffer memory 1 is used for demonstration. However, those skilled in the art can easily infer parallel operations of a plurality of buffer memories 1 from the foregoing description.

Referring to Figures 3 and 11, the second preferred embodiment of this invention has an identical hardware structure as the previous embodiment. However, the buffer device 100 of this embodiment is used to transform a block-based input data stream to a line-based output data stream, which is the inverse of the process of the first preferred embodiment, and is thus suitable for application in the last stage of the MPEG or JPEG decompression operation.

In this embodiment, the buffer memory 1 also includes a 640×8-byte memory. Each addressable location of the buffer memory 1 also has a size of 8×1 bytes. The read and write labeled positions are related to each other based on the formula:

$$O_n(t) = I_n((t \% w) \times h + (t/w)) \quad (4)$$

where $O_n(t)$ is the read labeled position for a read data sequence (t) of an n th read operation, $I_n(t)$ is

the write labeled position for a write data sequence
 (t) of an nth write operation, (h) is the height of a
 data block, (w) is a total number of data blocks that
 can be accommodated in a single data block row of the
 5 buffer memory 1, (t%w) is the remainder of the quotient
 of (t) divided by (w), and (t/w) is the integer part
 of the quotient of (t) divided by (w).

In this embodiment, since $h=8$ and $w=80$, therefore,
 formula (4) can be simplified as:

$$10 \quad O_n(t) = I_n((t\%80) \times 8 + (t/80)) \quad (5)$$

Operation of the buffer device 100 according to the
 second preferred embodiment will now be described in
 greater detail with reference to Figures 11 to 15.

1) First write operation:

15 Referring to Figure 11, the buffer controller 3 refers
 the write labeled positions in the label memory 2 so
 as to write the block-based input data stream into the
 buffer memory 1 according to the sequence $I_1(0)$, $I_1(1)$,
 $I_1(2)$,

20 2) First read operation:

Referring to Figure 12, like the previous embodiment,
 a read operation may be started even before completion
 of a current write operation. For instance, in this
 embodiment, before the last column of addressable
 25 locations corresponding to the write labeled positions
 $I_1(632) \sim I_1(639)$ are filled with data, reading of the
 data from the buffer memory 1 can begin. That is, even

before a write operation of the input data stream is completed, a read operation to generate the output data stream can be started.

As described in the foregoing, the read labeled positions $O_1(0), O_1(1), O_1(2), \dots$ are obtained through calculations of the buffer controller 3 according to the aforementioned formula (5). Hence, the buffer controller 3 refers to the read labeled positions in the label memory 2 when reading data from the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 according to the sequence $O_1(0), O_1(1), O_1(2), \dots$ (which correspond to the addressable locations having write labeled positions $I_1(0), I_1(8), I_1(16), \dots$) so as to result in the line-based output data stream.

Moreover, during the reading operation, writing in the addressable locations corresponding to the write labeled positions $I_1(632) \sim I_1(639)$ can proceed at the same time.

3) Second write operation:

At the end of the first write operation, i.e., writing in the addressable location corresponding to $I_1(639)$ has been completed, reading of data in some of the addressable locations of the buffer memory 1 has been completed. Hence, a second write operation can proceed immediately. Based on the aforesaid formula (3): $I_{n+1}(t) = O_n(t)$, writing of the input data stream during the second write operation proceeds in the sequence $I_2(0), I_2(1), \dots$

which also corresponds to the sequence $O_1(0), O_1(1), \dots$, as shown in Figure 13.

4) Second read operation:

Referring to Figure 14, at the end of the first read operation, i.e., reading of the addressable location corresponding to $O_1(639)$ has been completed, the second read operation can proceed immediately. As shown in Figure 15, the read labeled positions $O_2(0), O_2(1), \dots$ for the second read operation are obtained through calculations of the buffer controller 3 according to the aforementioned formula (5) and correspond to the write labeled positions $I_2(0), I_2(8), I_2(16), \dots$. In other words, although the second write operation is performed in sequence from left to right and from top to bottom, the buffer controller 3 can still calculate the desired read labeled positions $O_2(0), O_2(1), \dots$ corresponding to the write labeled positions $I_2(0), I_2(8), \dots$. In this manner, the output data stream still contains data in units of lines during the second read operation.

Therefore, even if data of the block-based input data stream are stored in non-adjacent addressable locations, the buffer controller 3 can always generate the desired read and write labeled positions to ensure correct data storage and retrieval by virtue of formulas (5) and (3).

In sum, this invention provides a method and buffer device for data stream transformation by labeling a buffer memory and through formulas (1), (3) and (4) to

permit data stream transformation between line-based and block-based data streams. When compared with the prior art, although a label memory 2 with a small memory space for storing read and write labeled positions is required, the size of the buffer memory 1 is reduced by half.

While the present invention has been described in connection with what is considered the most practical and preferred embodiments, it is understood that this invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments but is intended to cover various arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent arrangements.